

Poetry.

MY STRENGTH.

There are shadows drear,
Where the ghosts of fear
Have my sickening fancy led;
There are days of gloom,
There are nights of doom,
There are thorns where'er I tread.

There are clouds that drift,
That will not lift,
There are winds that wail their woe,
There are sluggish streams
Where no light gleams
With slimiest beds below.

Yet I need not grope
In the gloom; for Hope
Has ever a hand in mine;
And the Spirit of Love,
From that world above,
Lets the light of His presence shine.

Nor do I shrink,
As men might think,
From a weird and mournful wail.
Love casts out fear,
And with Hope so near
I have strength that cannot fail.

Though the icy breath
Of grim, cold Death
O'er the wings of Love should sweep,
They would not grow chill,
But, soaring still,
Me safe from the gloom would keep.

For with Hope to guide,
Can no ill betide.
So fearless I'll follow on,
Till the light divine
In my soul shall shine,
And the shadows all are gone.

—Jean Brodie.

Contributions.

THAT COMMITTEE ON CHURCH ORGANIZATION.

B. C. MOONAW.

About the most perilous thing a man can do is to propose ecclesiastical reforms. It is generally much safer for him to propagate doctrinal heresies, for he can usually do this without exciting much more than a passing curiosity, or an apologetic protest; but if he begins to talk about strictly external matters, pertaining to the discipline, or the government, or the ritual of the church immediately a thousand alert ears stand ready to detect a dangerous schismatic.

Why this is so I will not undertake to explain. Those who desire to retain the greatest possible popularity or influence, will do well to heed my warning and give ecclesiastical questions a wide berth. As for myself having no favors to ask, and only wishing to discover the exact truth in every department of human thought, or in every sphere of human activity, regardless of consequences to myself, I feel

free to publish what I think, always of course by the grace of the EVANGELIST.

When I was a boy and used to go swimming in my father's mill race, I found that instead of temporizing with the water it was best to plunge right into the middle of the stream all at once and have it over. So I am going to plunge right into the middle of my subject by saying, that so far as questions of church government, or discipline, or policy, or expediency are concerned, I would to-day adopt the Methodist plan, or the Baptist, or the Presbyterian, or any other which could be proven simply to be the most successful and expeditious plan of reaching sinners and converting souls. In my view that is the whole question, and there is positively nothing else in it.

But we are told by Brother Rensch, (unfortunately I have lost the copy of the paper containing his article, and must rely upon memory) that a perfect system of church government and church polity, covering all details, is laid down in the New Testament, and that efforts of our own to devise ways and means to manage church affairs are dangerous and uncalled for innovations upon the Gospel. All that we had to do, according to Brother Rensch, was to open the Bible, and there it was. This was the first half of his article.

The latter half gave a great many suggestions concerning the proper organization of a church, noted some grave defects in our present system, advised certain changes, etc., all of which, though laid down doubtless in the New Testament with perfect clearness, "so that a fool though a wayfaring man need not err therein," nevertheless were hidden from the majority of us until Brother Rensch discovered and revealed them.

In other words Brother Rensch fell into about as many self contradictions as I ever remember having seen in a single article. Our brother also fell into the error of confounding discipline with creed, which seems to be a sort of incurable malady with quite a number of reasoners, not at all amenable to treatment, and therefore we will waste no time on it.

As a matter of fact there are a thousand things connected with the management of church work, missionary, educational and other, the details of which would be too tedious and numerous to mention in this article, which were and are left to the sanctified common sense of God's people. What about our various conventions, our various societies, our organization of educational work, our district and national committees, our ownership of church property, are these things all set forth in detail in the New Testament?

They were never intended to be. Our German Baptist Brethren used to hold the view set forth in the first part of Brother Rensch's article, and for that reason they were opposed to Sunday-schools, prayer-meetings, missionary and educational work because they couldn't find them in the Bible, to be sure. They have long since, however, gotten over this weakness and gone heartily to work.

If we decide to act upon the principle that men are mere automata, incapable of reflection and deduction, then it would be well to adopt the ideas set forth by Brother Rensch. But the Bible is far from it. It is always God's plan that every faculty with which he has endowed us should be brought into active exercise in the execution of his great purposes, so that by exercise we should grow in all the directions necessary to the full, consistent, and rounded development of a Christ-like manhood.

But how are we to decide what is best to do in all these subordinate questions and exigencies of church work? I answer by giving full and unhampered play to suggestion and observation. Throw away narrowness and bigotry, profit by the successful experience of other churches, put in concrete form the best experience of our own workers, and in every way give a free and welcome field to thought and experiment until the best possible methods are found and grafted upon our policy. The Bible is always a guide in general principles, and everything must be tried by that divine standard. That is to say, any method which would produce immoral, or in any way hurtful results would be contrary to the teachings of the Bible; but all questions of expediency rest upon the broad ground laid down by our Savior, namely, "he that is not against us is for us." Luke 9:50.

I cannot go into the question as to how or to what extent, the general views set forth in this article should be crystallized in the work of the National Committee. That they have an opportunity to do a useful work there is no question, but every thing depends upon whether they shall yield to narrow traditions and partisan prejudices.

THERE are a great many people who want advice—that is they think they want it. They ask it—they cry aloud for it. They tell you they are just perishing for the lack of it. Whereas, what they want is not advice at all, but approval. They want you to endorse the course on which they have resolved.—Ex.

MEN have an itch rather to make religion than to use it.—B. Whichcote.